

87
THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the Opening of the
NEW CHAPEL
IN
BRIDGE-STREET, BRISTOL,

AUGUST 24, 1786.

By BENJ. DAVIES, D.D.

To which is prefixed An

K
INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

By the Rev. JAMES MANNING.

*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his
Glory.* Psalm cii. 16.

PUBLISHED BY DESIRE.

L O N D O N:

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AUGUST 25, 1788

BY BENJAMIN



INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

By the Rev. JAMES MANNING.

At the Late Meeting of the Society in the
City, March 18.

PUBLISHED BY D. BAKER.

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Printed at A. E. B. & Co., Bristol; and J. B. B. & Co., London.

A N

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

Delivered at the Opening of

Bridge-Street Chapel, Bristol,

AUGUST 24, 1786,

Being BARTHOLOMEW-DAY.

By JAMES MANNING.

This solemn Service was conducted in the following Order.

The Rev. Mr. Manning opened the Service with an Introductory Address, Prayer, and reading the Scriptures.

The Rev. Mr. Moffat prayed.

The Rev. Dr. Davies preached.

The Rev. Mr. Ashburn concluded with Prayer.

THE
INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

My Christian Brethren,

THE first Christians were compelled to struggle with difficulties, which it is our advantage, in a happier æra of the world, to be able to know only from description. Persecuted as they were, by those persons upon whom it was incumbent to have patronized their doctrines; obliged to bear the scourge of hatred, the stab of reproach, and the united opposition of prejudice and malevolence, their fortitude, integrity and faith, in such circumstances, cannot be too warmly celebrated.

Nor have instances been wanting in the latter ages of the Christian Church,

vi INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

of a like disinterested attachment to the cause of true religion. This day, which, according to the ritual of the church of England, is styled Bartholomew-day, recalls to your remembrance an event unparalleled in the history of the Reformation at home or abroad.

On this day you recollect, that two thousand clergymen did not hesitate to resign their preferments in the church, and expose themselves and families to poverty, disgrace, and persecution, rather than violate conscience by conforming to things imposed, not agreeable, as they apprehended to the gospel they preached.

We must behold with admiration—with reverence, their invincible courage and firmness, in standing forward as champions at the risk of every thing dear to them in this world, to explain, defend, and transmit to posterity the right of private judgment, the liberty of worshipping according
to

to the dictates of conscience, and other essential interests of christianity and human nature.

Such were the first formers of the dissenting interest. But did nonconformity die with them? Would to God it had, provided the causes of it had been removed. But as long as it is supported by a regard to primitive christianity, to the sacred rights of conscience, the honour of Christ as the supreme head of the church, and the credit and success of his institutions, it must be expected that nonconformity will still exist.

I think myself peculiarly happy in the opportunity now afforded me, of addressing a Society of Protestant Dissenters, who, inheriting the principles, and animated by the example of their forefathers, appear zealous to assert their unalienable right to the exercise of private judgment, and to support that mode of worship which they think most agreeable to the sim-

viii INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

plicity of the gospel. Forgive me if I boast on your behalf. I speak it to your praise; you act on enlarged principles, such as become Christians and Protestants. You consider what this liberty of worshipping God has cost your ancestors. It is a valuable portion "which they took," at the peril of their lives, "out of the hand of the Amorite with their sword and with their bow." Anxious to convey to posterity this inestimable privilege, you have built an house unto the Lord; not for the support of a sect or a party, but for the service of Catholic Christianity according to the scriptures; not to perpetuate a causeless separation, but for the solemnity and decorum of your religious assemblies, until God shall throw open the doors of the national establishment. You have honoured God with your substance. Some have spared of their exigence, and some out of their abundance, and that too with a surprizing gene-

generosity. “Blessed are ye for this
“loan that ye have lent unto the
“Lord. May God remember you
“concerning this, and wipe not out
“your good deeds that ye have done
“for the house of your God and the
“offices thereof!” This building
does equal credit to your piety and
beneficence. Not a superb and mag-
nificent one fitted to the ostentatious
worship of the law, but a house de-
cently neat and elegantly plain, suited
to the simplicity of that gospel-wor-
ship which must be performed in
spirit and in truth. While, in con-
sequence of your liberal contributions,
this house exceeds the former in
beauty and convenience, prudence has
directed you to form the plan and
regulate its execution, in such a man-
ner, that it cannot be reflected upon
as, in any view, unsuitable to the so-
lemn use to which it is appropriated,
or the circumstances of the persons
who attend in it.

We

X INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

We meet you here not to consecrate the edifice you have erected. We pretend not to any power of conveying any peculiar sanctity to places. Nor do we believe that any thing we can do, in any forms of consecration, would render a place more holy in the sight of God, or more fit either for his presence or his worship. The whole universe is his temple, and will he be limited to any particular abiding-place? How vain the thought, O thou Being supremely raised above all beings! "Behold! the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that we have builded!"

Yet, though in a literal and local sense the all-present Deity will not be confined here, we have reason to hope that he will, nevertheless, in a special manner be present, "to have respect unto the prayer and supplication which his servants shall make towards him in this place." A sign from heaven,
like

like that which appeared in the Jewish temple, to confirm this hope, we must not expect. A cloud of glory declaring the immediate presence of God among us, we look not to see. Types and shadows, and the burthen of ceremonies are done away. But behold a greater evidence is here. The Son of God himself; who hath left us the words of eternal truth, declaring that "where two or three are gathered together in his name, there will he be in the midst of them."

Yes, my Brethren, in whatever place the disciples of Jesus assemble as believers in him, from a regard to his authority, and for the purposes of his glory, to worship the common Father through him as the only Mediator, to hear Christ preached and his doctrine of peace proclaimed, or to commemorate his dying love, there we may conceive of him as peculiarly present.

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xii INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

If it be your happiness thus to meet in the name of Jesus here, we are warranted to say—the Lord is with you of a truth, and this is none other than the house of God. Let me then call upon you to unite with me in prayer to almighty God, that he would give you grace always to enter this place with those views and dispositions which will secure his presence and blessing, that the Lord may be with you as he was with your fathers, and that he may never leave you nor forsake you.

THE

THE
SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

ZECH. vi. 13.

EVEN HE SHALL BUILD THE TEMPLE OF
THE LORD, AND HE SHALL BEAR THE
GLORY.

BY a remarkable train of providences, the Jews were now released from captivity, and happily settled in the land of their fathers. But they were called to engage in a very arduous undertaking; even to rebuild the Temple of the Lord, which for many years had lain in ruins. The greatness of the undertaking must, of itself, create difficulties to a people in their circumstances. And those were much augmented by the jealousy and envy of surrounding nations, who studied, by all the means in their power, to obstruct, or at least, to retard the execution of the import-

ant design. When discouragement prevailed to such a degree, as to depress their spirits and weaken their hands, the prophet Zechariah was commissioned by the Lord to deliver such messages as tended to revive their zeal, that the work might be resumed with new vigour and alacrity.

The business was under the direction of two persons of distinguished rank, viz. *Zerubbabel their governor or prince, and Joshua the high priest.* To each of them, the prophet is directed to address himself in the name of the Lord; that, their zeal being revived, the people might be encouraged by their influence and example.

The chapter, out of which our *text* is taken, contains the encouraging message delivered to *Joshua*; which consists not only of animating *promises*, but expressive *symbolical acts*.—*Take silver and gold and make crowns, and set them on the head of Joshua the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, Behold the Man whose name is the BRANCH! And he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. Even he shall*

shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory: And shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*

There is no reason to suppose, that there was a design, by these acts, to invest *Joshua* with *regal authority*; though, in process of time, his successors in the priesthood assumed *royalty*. The intention of them seems rather to have been, to represent the success which should attend his exertions as a priest, for completing the temple of the Lord.

But the work in which he was engaged was an emblem of one more arduous and important, even the raising of a Spiritual Temple for God, in which he is resolved to fix his everlasting residence. Therefore a crown was, by divine direction, set on the head of *Joshua*, that he might appear a more perfect type and representative of that glorious person, by whom the gospel-church was to be erected as an immortal temple for *Jehovah*. That by *the man whose name is the BRANCH*, we are to understand a different person from *Joshua*, is evident

* Ver. 12, 13.

from what is spoken to him by the Lord in another place: *Behold! I will bring forth my servant the Branch* *. And it is worthy of observation, that the passage before us is rendered in the Chaldee paraphrase, *Behold the man whose name is Messiah*.

The name *Branch* is very naturally explained by the words of the prophet Isaiah: *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots* †. The family of David was so reduced, as to resemble the stock of a tree withering and dying, when the Messiah sprung up as a strong, a vigorous and flourishing shoot.

In some ancient versions, the words before us are rendered, *whose name is the East*. And it is not unnatural to suppose, that the translators intended to compare the appearance of the Messiah to the *rising of the sun in the East*, with light, and majesty, and glory. — On the whole, the Lord was willing to direct the eyes of the Jews from that material building which they were erecting, to a

* Chap. iii. 8.

† Isai. xi. 1.

nobler and more glorious fabric, which the hands of *Messiah* were to raise.

Upon this occasion, with great pleasure I congratulate you, my Christian Friends, on the success which has crowned your design, of building a house for the worship of God. I trust, you embarked in it from the purest motives; from a zeal for the cause of God, and an affectionate regard to the interests of immortal souls. I, therefore, rejoice with you, that, under the favorable smiles of heaven, your wishes have been accomplished. — And I would hope, that this is a pledge of much good to be done within these walls. To have a decent and commodious house to assemble in for divine worship, must be peculiarly pleasing: yet I trust, you will ever consider this in due subordination to the more important design which our adorable Redeemer is engaged in. For it is *He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.*

The words naturally lead to these two observations:

B

I. That

I. That the building of God's Spiritual Temple, being conducted by the Redeemer, will proceed with prosperity and success.

II. That he receives and bears distinguished glory, as engaged in this great design.

I. That the building of God's Spiritual Temple, being conducted by the Redeemer, will proceed with prosperity and success.— The important truth contained in this observation will more evidently appear, by attending to the following propositions :

1. This magnificent design is the principal object of the counsels and purposes of God.

The creation of the world was a design great and noble in itself and worthy of God. It stands as a surprizing monument of the wisdom and power of the divine Architect, and discovers amazing exhibitions of his exuberant goodness. The plan was so perfect, and the execution so complete, that when it was finished, *the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy* *. But this joy was soon interrupted, and dark shades obscured the beauties of

* Job xxxviii. 7.

the creation. Man, the principal of God's creatures on earth, and for whose sake the inferior world was made, revolted from his God, sunk from the glory with which he was invested, and by transgression, involved a world in ruin. For, *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned**. However some may controvert the doctrine which asserts, that the contagion of Adam's sin has infected all his posterity with guilt and pollution; it is a truth which admits of no dispute, that mankind are universally guilty and depraved. The image of the Creator is defaced, the Glory is faded; *the crown is fallen from our heads, woe unto us that we have sinned†!* The temple of God lies in ruins; the sacred fire on the altar is extinguished; the divine inhabitant is departed.

But will he for ever abandon this creation to the enemy of God, and the destroyer of man? No; but from the ruins of our nature he will raise a nobler edifice, in which he will dwell for ever. For God, *who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-*

* Rom. v. 12.

† Lam. v. 16.

with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. And, that we might not mistake or overlook the origin of this purpose, the apostle adds, *by grace are ye saved* *. No qualities or virtues remained in us which could entitle us to the Creator's favor; for, where nothing appears but wretchedness and sin, for such creatures, mercy and grace must be the only advocates. That the blessed God has formed such a merciful design, we have the fullest assurance of from the inspired volume. Early intimations were given of it; and all the dispensations of providence were intended to prepare the way for its execution, till, *in the fulness of time*, that illustrious person appeared to whom it was entrusted. —Which leads me to observe,

2. That the conduct and execution of this grand design is committed to the glorious Immanuel, the incarnate Son of God.

We may rest assured, that the accomplishment of a scheme of such magnitude and importance, would be entrusted in such hands as might infallibly insure its success.

* Ephes. ii. 4, 5.

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Therefore, the prophet Isaiah having this object in his eye, breaks out in this triumphant language, *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace**. Let us, therefore, direct our attention to what the scripture says of this august person. And I will not hesitate to say, that this is not a matter of mere speculation, but a subject of moment, in which we are deeply interested.

That he is a *man*, is a truth, yea, an important truth. For, being arrayed in our nature, he appears as our brother, and is capacitated to be a *merciful* as well as a *faithful high priest*; being *touched with the feeling of our infirmities* †, and able to sympathize with us under all our burdens and sorrows. But, when we have viewed him as a *man*, let us also recognize him as *God*. For *his name is Immanuel, God with us* ‡. He, who came of the *seed of Abraham*, according to the *flesh*, in another view is, *God*

* Isai. ix. 6.

† Heb. iv. 15.

‡ Matt. i. 23.

over all, blessed for ever : for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily †. Such is that living and enlivening Branch which was promised to spring up, to build the Temple of the Lord.*

But through what scenes of humiliation was he obliged to pass, that every impediment which obstructed this great design might be removed. *He grew up as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground : He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. All we like sheep had gone astray, and turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all ‡. And, in the language of the New Testament, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross §. Thus low must the Saviour sink, that he might lay the foundation of the Spiritual Temple in an atonement for the sins of his people.—But he appears again, and says, I am he that liveth and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore **, When he had paid the sinner's debt, death*

* Rom. ix. 5.

† Col. ii. 9.

‡ Isai. liii. 2, 3, 6.

§ Phil. ii. 8.

** Rev. i. 18.

could not confine him ; but from the ignominious cross he passed to the throne of heaven. There he sits clothed with majesty and invested with universal authority. All the treasures of heaven are in his hands, and committed to his disposal. And all this he employs for the accomplishment of this grand design.

3. The materials for the building are *men*, who are by nature in a state of degeneracy and sin,

To see a fair creation arising into existence, out of a confused mass of jarring elements, must raise a high admiration of the wisdom and power of the great builder. To see the dust of the earth shaped and organized into a human body, animated with the *breath of life*, and made the habitation of a rational and immortal spirit, must be acknowledged to be no less surprizing. But the effects produced in the *kingdom of grace* are, if possible, still more to be admired. For, however dignified the station which man was originally ordained to occupy, and, however distinguishing the glory with which he was invested to capacitate him

for it, we have the fullest evidence that he is now sunk so deep into misery and sin, that no created power is able to restore him. How visible the marks of our degeneracy and ruin? x It is lamentable that the curious fabric of the body, formed for immortality, should be subjected to dissolution and death; but much more to be lamented, that the immortal soul should be so sunk and degraded. It has lost the power of glorifying its Creator, and is become incapable of that fellowship with him which is the spring of happiness. That intelligent principle, which was designed to be the *candle of the Lord* in man, and his guide in the way to happiness, is covered with clouds of ignorance and error, and involved in mournful darkness. How affecting is the picture which the apostle draws of human misery in this respect? *Having the understanding darkened and the heart blinded, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart* *. — The will which was originally disposed to approve

* Ephes. iv. 18.

of whatever is pleasing to God, and cheerfully to comply with his injunctions, is become rebellious and obstinate. *For the carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be* *.

—The *affections*, which in man's primitive state were formed to delight in God, and to inspire the soul with pleasure and alacrity, in the pursuit of those things which are adapted to minister spiritual and intellectual happiness, are, through the fall, become earthly, carnal, and sensual. Sensible objects strike the mind much more forcibly than those which are spiritual, heavenly, and divine.

If this be allowed to be a just statement of the case, it will necessarily follow, that, creatures so corrupt and degenerate must, in the highest degree, be vile and abominable in the sight of a holy God. They can have no title to his favor, nor any ability or inclination to render themselves pleasing in his sight.—Might it not, therefore, have been expected, that they should be abhorred and rejected? and, that, if God is deter-

* Rom. viii. 7.

mined to build for himself a *Spiritual Temple*, he should provide materials by creating a new race of innocent beings. But, wonder, O heavens! these are the materials with which he has decreed to raise a glorious and immortal temple. Recovered by grace, they are made *lively stones* in that *spiritual house*, in which the blessed God will dwell for ever.

4. By his word and Holy Spirit the divine Architect prepares these materials for the building, and by successive degrees of improvement brings the work forwards to perfection.

It has been observed already, that this great design is the principal object of the divine decrees; and, however various and diversified the dispensations of providence may appear to be, under the direction of infinite wisdom, they all tend to the accomplishment of this purpose.—But the principal instrument is the *word of God*, or the *Gospel*, which is, therefore, called *the word of the kingdom*, because it is the grand mean of extending and establishing the kingdom of divine grace.—Many inferior agents are

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honored

honored with handling this divinely prepared instrument. For the ministers of the gospel are *laborers together with God* *, in carrying on this sacred building. And it is their unspeakable mercy to be enabled to discharge the sacred trust with sincerity and fidelity. Because, otherwise, they can have no rational ground of expecting those heavenly influences to which the divine oracles uniformly ascribe the intire success of the gospel-ministry. Even the apostles of Christ, though furnished with extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers, made this confession in the amplest manner, *I have planted and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase* †. *The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God* ‡.—Now the progress of the work may be viewed distinctly in the following particulars.

(1.) It is seen, when, by a work of divine grace, men are prepared to be *lively stones* in the sacred building. It has been proved that the materials are *fallen degenerate men*. But in this respect they are only *remotely* so. For the *immediate* materials

* 1 Cor. iii. 9. † 1 Cor. iii. 6. ‡ 2 Cor. x. 4.
are

are men *regenerated* and *converted* by divine grace. Unless we are the subjects of this change, we are totally unfit for this purpose, and can have no place in the building. Yea, should any such, through the negligence or ignorance of inferior builders, be placed in it, when the chief Builder comes to inspect it, they shall be removed as blemishes in the sacred fabric.

(2.) Its progress is seen in the advancement of the great work of sanctification. Divine truth shining into the mind, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, will gradually renew the soul and assimilate it to the divine likeness. By the improvement of spiritual and sacred knowledge, by the cultivation of every Christian grace and virtue, and by the advancement of real piety and holiness, the strength and beauty of the sacred edifice are promoted. And by a very gradual improvement will it arise at length to that measure of perfection and glory which the divine purpose has ordained for it.

(3.) Its perfection will take place, when all ordained to have a place in it are actually united

united to it, and the whole and every part rendered complete in holiness and glory, conformable to the image of Christ. In its present appearance there are very evident signs of imperfection. For, compared with the bulk of the human race, how inconsiderable is the number of those who have a visible place in the building? And among those who, in appearance, are joined to it, is there not reason to fear, that there are not a few who shall at last be separated from it? Even in those who appear to be *lively stones*, are there not many remaining blemishes and imperfections? This is frequently a matter of very serious lamentation.—But let us rejoice in the hope and prospect of its future success and perfection. The work is in the hands of Christ, and we may be assured that he will not desert it, but carry it on to perfection. The happy period is advancing, when numerous converts shall be brought in and made lively stones in the building. And a more blessed day is fixed in the purpose of God, when every part shall attain perfection and be beautified with unfading glory. For
the

the Saviour will *bring forth the head-stone of it with shoutings* of praise to the grace that completed it.

5. The sacred edifice thus erected is designed to be an immortal temple for Jehovah.

This idea occurs often in the *New Testament*. *Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord* *. What an exalted view does this give us of the dignity and honor conferred on those, who belong in reality to the Church of God? It intimates

(1.) That the church is chosen to be the peculiar residence of the Lord. *For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people* †.—But will God indeed dwell with men? When we think only of *their* pollution and unworthiness, such obstacles appear as seem to represent it to be impossible. But remembering *his* infinite grace, and the

* Ephes. ii. 20, 21.

† 2 Cor. vi. 16.

most surprizing displays of it given in Christ, we conclude that such condescension is not impossible. In a very important sense, this takes place in the present imperfect state of the church: but in the highest sense, it will take place in the world of glory. *Then* there will be nothing seen in this temple of the Lord to create offence, or to provoke him to withdraw or hide his presence.

(2.) In this Temple, the Lord makes the brightest displays of his glory. His glory was seen in the temple at Jerusalem, in that bright cloud which covered the mercy-seat. But as that magnificent edifice was no more than a *type* of the Spiritual Temple, or the Church of Christ, so that glory was but a symbol of that brighter glory which shines in it. In the operations of divine grace, there are even *now* such displays of glory, that the holy angels are said to acquire more enlarged conceptions of the glories of God, from the discoveries he makes of himself in this Temple. For it is his pleasure, *that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom*
of

*of God**. Our progress in religion will bear proportion to the views we have of this glory; and when the one is complete, the other will attain its perfection. For *we all, with open face, beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory unto glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord*†.

(3.) In this Temple, the Lord receives the most sublime and acceptable homage. Christians not only compose a *Spiritual House* or Temple, but are *an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*‡. It would afford peculiar pleasure to a benevolent and humane person, to receive the free and grateful acknowledgements of thousands, whose misery he had relieved.—Similar to this is the worship paid in this Temple. All the worshippers conspire to acknowledge, that they were once miserable and deserved to remain so for ever. They all ascribe their recovery to free grace and redeeming love. They all confess that they *are not their own*, but his property who bought them with his

* Ephes. iii. 10. † 2 Cor. iii. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

blood. In this Temple that sublime anthem will be sung without end or intermission, *Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever* *. This is the homage which the God of grace delights to receive.

(4.) In this Temple, the fellowship of God is enjoyed, as the source of pure and immortal blessedness. What a high sense had David, of the sacred pleasure to be enjoyed in the house of the Lord? *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple* †. And every real Christian must have a sacred relish for the same entertainment. But if fellowship with God is productive of such joy, whilst his Temple is in so imperfect a state, to what a pitch will the bliss arise when it stands finished and complete in glory in the upper world? And let me be allowed to say, that, if we have any acquaintance with spiritual religion, the hea-

* Rev. v. 13. † Ps. xxvii. 4.

ven we look for is the immediate enjoyment of God, and we cannot desire or conceive of sublimer happiness.

Having dwelt so long on the first observation, the next must be handled in a very brief manner.

II. That Christ receives and bears distinguished glory, as engaged in this great design—*Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.*

I apprehend that two ideas are here intended, viz. There is a glory which the Redeemer bears as connected with his mediatorial office;—and there is a glory which he is yet to receive, arising from the final accomplishment of the grand design he has undertaken.

I. There is a glory which the Redeemer bears as connected with his mediatorial office. In reference to this he says, *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory* *? Agreeably to the plan settled in the divine counsels, he was first to pass through scenes of humiliation and sufferings, to endure the cross and shed

* Luke xxiv. 26.

his blood. But the cross was ordained to be the foundation of his throne, and by the merit of his blood he was to arise to the kingdom. With reference, therefore, to his ascension into glory, as I conceive, those remarkable words are spoken. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in** This glory includes, not only, the majestic appearance of his person as seen by angels and glorified saints; but that supreme dominion and universal authority, with which he is invested as the Saviour. Alluding to this, he says in his prayer before he suffered; *as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him†*. And after his resurrection he says, *all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth‡*. Not only, the treasures of the kingdom of grace are in his hands, but he holds the reins of providence, and will so order and direct every event, as will be most favourable to the successful execution of the gracious

* Ps. xxiv. 7.

† John xvii. 2.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.

commission he has received.—In this important sense he *now bears the glory*. But,

2. There is a glory which he is yet to receive, arising from the final accomplishment of the grand design he has undertaken.

The *mediatorial kingdom* will continue only until the ends of it have been answered. But, will the resignation of it imply a degradation of the Saviour from the rank he held whilst it subsisted? Rather, will he not rise to superior glory? Eternal praises will sound to his name in that immortal temple which his hands have raised. Every saved sinner will ascribe to him salvation and everlasting glory.—The Father himself will honor him who executed his decrees in so perfect a manner.—The magnitude of the work itself will be remembered to his honor. The zeal for God and the benevolence to man which he discovered; the vast difficulties and mighty obstacles which he surmounted; and the numerous enemies which he vanquished and triumphed over; all these will be placed in the clearest point of view, to procure him a revenue of immortal glory.—When we see him enduring

the agonies of the cross, we are ready to say, "Lord! are guilty souls of so much worth, that thine inestimable blood should be given for their redemption?" But, *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied* *. A triumphal crown of unfading lustre shall grace his head, whilst millions of happy saints ascribe their salvation to his dying love. This honor the kind Saviour will with pleasure receive, and own it to be an ample return for all he has done and suffered for our redemption.

Will you bear with me for a few moments, whilst I attempt a brief improvement of what has been delivered? And it will be natural to remark,

1. How worthy of our admiration are the gracious designs of God? The highest end he can propose is the erecting a monument of everlasting glory to himself. And it is but a reasonable tribute to his supremacy and goodness, that we should cheerfully acknowledge the infinite propriety of its being so.—What a mixture of joy and gratitude should, therefore, fill our hearts,

Isa. liii. 11.

when

when we are assured, that a benevolent regard to the welfare of our souls is connected with the manifestation of his own glory?

2. How vast and immense are our obligations to our divine Saviour? What unparalleled kindness has he discovered, in enduring so much for our redemption? What unspeakable advantages has he procured for us? And what glorious prospects does he set before us? I trust, it is our sincere concern to love and praise and honor him now. But the time is approaching, when we shall be enabled to offer him a higher and nobler tribute: when our love to him will burn with the purest flame, and our obedience shall be perfect.

3. How sacred and honorable is the christian character! To be Christians, is to be lively stones in that sacred building which is God's everlasting temple. What a glory does this instamp on creatures so vile and unworthy as we are! How solicitous should we be to know that this honor belongs to us! And how should we study to conduct ourselves in a manner answerable to this dignity! *Holiness becometh thy house*

house for ever *.—Therefore listen to the divine command, *Be ye holy, for I am holy* †.

4. It is a peculiar privilege and honor to be permitted to contribute our part to the furtherance of this great design. The blessed God does not need our aid to give efficacy to his purposes; but confers a distinguishing honor upon us, if he deigns to employ us as his instruments. The ministers of the gospel are peculiarly honored, in being admitted to be *laborers together with God*. And in whatever way you have an opportunity of promoting this glorious cause, reckon it your high privilege to be allowed to do it.

5. Let me be allowed one word to my christian friends of this society. It was a good design you engaged in, to erect this building as a house for God. The zeal and perseverance with which you have pursued it deserves commendation; and it is a matter of joy that your exertions have been attended with such success. Nor can it fail of affording you pleasure, whenever you assemble here, that you are now pro-

* Pf. xciii. 5.

† 1 Pet. i. 16.

vided with so commodious a place of worship. Yet let me caution you in the most serious manner, not to content yourselves with this; but let your zeal continue for the success and prosperity of that spiritual building, which the Redeemer has engaged to raise as a Temple for the Lord. And be not satisfied without good evidence, that, by the grace of God, you compose a part of that sacred edifice.

6. Finally, How glorious will that day be, when the purposes of God are fully accomplished, and the work of Christ perfectly completed! Then shall the top-stone of the building be set on, and the work crowned with eternal glory. And it is impossible for me to conceive for you or myself a higher wish, than, that we may all share in the honors and the triumphs of that illustrious day. Amen.



F I N I S.

